

COMMENTARY

DE GAULLE IN POWER

The Fifth Republic in the Mirror of History

H. STUART HUGHES

AMONG the various anecdotes, authentic or *bien trouvées*, that circulated in Paris this summer, the one that best expressed the country's perplexities ran as follows: an old friend of de Gaulle's, not currently associated with the government, came to call on the new Prime Minister; on taking his leave he was amazed to find André Malraux, reputed to be de Gaulle's closest collaborator, literally throwing himself upon him with the anxious query, "You who know the General so well, tell me, what does he really think?"

During the weeks between the installation of de Gaulle's government in late May and the announcement of the new constitution in early August, the whole of France was

GENERAL DE GAULLE's coming to power has revived the discussion around the French political tradition. Here, H. STUART HUGHES sketches the background of authoritarian rule in France, and appraises de Gaulle's political conception of France and of his own role in the light of history, as well as the attitudes of various leaders and groups in France and Algeria to de Gaulle and the solution of the present crisis. Professor Hughes, who teaches history at Harvard, is the author of *Consciousness and Society*, a study in European political thought since 1890 which Knopf will issue this month. He is a frequent contributor to COMMENTARY, whose August number carried an exchange by him on Catholicism and democracy with Professor Michael Fogarty.

asking itself the same question. The revolutionary change had been accomplished—what the political experts had dismissed as impossible had in fact occurred—but the outlines of the new regime were far from clear. The country was living suspended between two eras, with the Fourth Republic obviously dead, but the Fifth still to be defined. In Paris the commissions elaborating the new institutions and the new policy worked long and earnestly—no holidays for them. The rest of the French elite simply went off on vacation.

It was a strange and most unrevolutionary atmosphere. There was as little apparent enthusiasm as there was militant or organized protest. The dominant mood seemed to be one of acceptance tinged with anxiety. In the dead weeks that extended from the Fourteenth of July—a holiday celebrated this year with unprecedented official orchestration and expense—to the beginning of the autumn electoral season, the French held their breath and hoped for the best. Their fate, they knew, had largely been taken out of their hands. With all other possibilities foreclosed, they had played their last card. And the most disquieting thing was that nobody knew exactly what this card was worth.

Hence all the obvious parallels and precedents were as likely as not inapplicable. The American journalists who found reassur-

ance in de Gaulle, and pictured him as the restorer of orderly administration, might be as far or farther astray than the Italians who quite understandably, in terms of their own experience, compared him to Mussolini. Both tended to simplify an enormously complex situation. All that was clear to everybody was that the French had entrusted themselves to a *man*—rather than to an idea, an institution, or a party. In this situation, a “cult of personality” was unavoidable, however distasteful it might be to the majority of Frenchmen. Or—to quote Malraux’s Fourteenth of July declaration—“Some want the Republic without General de Gaulle, as others want . . . de Gaulle without the Republic. But France . . . wants the Republic *with* . . . de Gaulle.” As an ideological definition for the vacation season, that had to suffice.

Thus any effort to place the new dispensation, to situate the France of de Gaulle in political and historical perspective, must start with an assessment of the General himself. Even this narrower task has its inextricable complexities. For de Gaulle as a historical figure has appeared in two quite different capacities: his original bright image is blurred with a second image of more doubtful character. From 1940 to 1945 he was the lone fighter for freedom, the man who gradually succeeded in rallying to his cause the vast majority of the public-spirited and the politically articulate—and thereby restored to the French people their national self-esteem. Two years later, however, he reappeared as the leader of a faction, a political partisan who, under the guise of reuniting the French, in fact divided them still further. This second effort, of course, ended in failure. But its highly chequered existence altered beyond recognition the original meaning of the terms “Gaullism” and “Gaullist.” In the war and Resistance years these had come to suggest a militant republicanism—a spirit and a constituency that were quasi-socialist in character. After 1947, Gaullism was distinctly a movement of the right, with a large proportion of its adherents drawn from the former following of

Pétain. By 1953, when the General gave his followers their “freedom of action” and withdrew from the leadership of his Rally of the French People, little seemed left of his original reputation and prestige. In this perspective, his triumphant return five years later appears all the more surprising.

FORTUNATELY for his historical repute (and for the peace of mind of those who are currently seeking to understand him) de Gaulle occupied the half decade of his retirement with the composition of two stout volumes of memoirs. From these there emerges once again a figure of large dimensions—of a stubborn consistency through all his changes of following and fortune. A few very simple ideas, we see, have been the mainsprings of his conduct. And these are notably archaic: a notion of France as a nation of special excellence and with a special “mission,” of the French as a people who can be led by “dreams,” above all a notion of “grandeur”—the word is the *leit-motif* of his whole book. When “grandeur” fails, we gather, then life is scarcely worth living.

But this is not all. There is also de Gaulle the expert in tank warfare, the young officer driving hard for the technical improvement of his army. There is the de Gaulle who can share with his Socialist counsellors the vision of a new France of social justice. In short, there is de Gaulle the modern man. In his memoirs he appears as a Churchillian figure, temperamentally a survival of the old regime, but sufficiently intelligent to be aware of the technical needs of an industrial world. As in Churchill’s case, however, this awareness takes second rank: de Gaulle is not really interested in economic problems. For him, the modernization of France is a subsidiary concern: social reform, technical improvement—these are simply means to a greater goal. Again it is the “grandeur” of his country that is primary.

Yet surely one can doubt whether the grandeur of France is compatible with its industrial modernization. It is far from clear

that one can reconcile a nostalgia for past glories with an adjustment to the contemporary world. This is the central problem confronting the Gaullist experiment.

It was as a lone individual without an organized movement or party that de Gaulle came to power last spring. His wartime followers had scattered in a hundred directions; only fragments remained of his Rally of the French People. At the start of the May crisis no more than a handful of deputies saw him as a possible solution. By the end of the month he received a massive vote of confidence. This sequence of events already presents an enormous riddle. Since we lack other guideposts, the manner of de Gaulle's coming to power may suggest an initial characterization of his regime.

In a technical sense, the advent of de Gaulle was legal and constitutional. In real terms it was not. (We may recall that Mussolini and Hitler similarly came to power under technically constitutional auspices.) In the absence of organized support in France itself, de Gaulle was enabled to come to power *solely* through the threat of force from Algiers. The North African coup d'état of May 13 created a situation which he alone was in a position to resolve. Hence the Deputies had no true freedom of choice: they were *forced* to vote for de Gaulle—or to face the consequences. These consequences, however, were not precisely what the press took them to be. It was not the threat of civil war or a Popular Front that drove the Deputies to vote the investiture: there was scarcely anyone prepared to take up arms for the Fourth Republic, and the Popular Front was never a real possibility. It was simply and brutally the fear of a parachute attack from Algiers.

All this may be obvious—but in the euphoria of June and July it was something that tended to be forgotten. De Gaulle came in not on a wave of enthusiasm, but in the cold chill of fear. As one wag summarized the situation: "Caught between red terror and white terror, France was scared blue." There was nothing glorious about it—no trace of grandeur here. In their minds, the

Deputies could already see the "*paras*" slogging down the Champs Elysées—as they did in fact on the Fourteenth of July, to the applause of a delighted throng. And even the courageous band among the non-Communist left who voted against de Gaulle's investiture did so with an eye more to their historical reputations than to any practical result. Everyone wanted to be among the immortal "eighty"—a reference to those who in 1940 had voted against Pétain. But they did not want the eighty to swell to too large a number: even *they* knew in their hearts that there was no alternative to de Gaulle.

YET this was a solution which very few preferred in the abstract. Such was the paradox of the Gaullist "revolution." It was a revolution almost without partisans—except for the elegant young men who honked their horns in cadence as they drove their expensive cars around the Etoile. Sometime back about 1950 there had been talk of a "Gaullism without de Gaulle." Now quite unexpectedly, in May of 1958, France had de Gaulle without Gaullism. For even the junta in Algiers had put forward his candidacy as a kind of second best. The *colons*, at least, would have preferred someone more uncompromisingly authoritarian and conservative. Thus from the very moment of his investiture de Gaulle was able to present himself in the role he preferred, as an arbiter above party. In this sense he succeeded in returning to his wartime image—in transcending the partisan memory that his Rally of the French People had left behind it.

At the same time there was more than accident—and another wartime memory—in the fact that the original impulse behind the new regime had come from Algiers. For the first time in history the French Empire had imposed its will on the home country, and the fact that this was possible was itself a legacy of the war period and of the personal initiative of de Gaulle. From 1940 to 1944 Free France had been largely an imperial, an African affair. It had established its first solid territorial base at Brazzaville; it was from the Chad that Leclerc began the spec-

tacular advance north across the Sahara that brought the Free French forces into the main theater of combat; and Algiers provided the temporary capital for the provisional government that was eventually to assume power at home. De Gaulle's wartime thinking was consciously and proudly imperial (again a Churchillian parallel). Among the charges he makes in his memoirs against "defeatists" like Weygand and Pétain, one of the most important is their failure to think in imperial terms, to see the possibilities of further resistance beyond the limits of continental France. And when at last de Gaulle was proved right, when he entered Paris in triumph in August of 1944, he brought the French Empire with him. This, as Herbert Lüthy has pointed out, was a dubious gift at best. For it meant that postwar France, unlike Germany or Italy, would be unable to devote all its energies to reconstruction at home. There would always be the obsession of the Empire, the agonizing drain of colonial warfare.

The Fourth Republic did not collapse because of anything it did or failed to do at home—although its record there was mediocre enough. Had there been no Empire left, had France been in the situation of Germany or Italy, it could doubtless have muddled along with its existing institutions. Its failure came on the question of the colonies, and more particularly on the question of Algeria. For those who love paradox there may be a bitter satisfaction in recognizing that de Gaulle came to power precisely because the burden with which he himself had saddled his country—the burden of imperial grandeur—had finally become too heavy to bear.

Once installed in power, the new regime obviously had to supply itself with some sort of ideological equipment. The product of this necessity has been much fumbling and a minimum of clear definition. But by the end of the summer the rough lines of an ideological pedigree were beginning to emerge. The French, after all, are a history-minded people, and every French regime since 1814 has tried to anchor itself in some earlier historical experience. By 1958, how-

ever, most of these precedents from the past had worn themselves out. For the new rulers of the French nation the range of ideological choice was narrow in the extreme.

JUST as the successive collapses of 1940 and 1958 had discredited the formula of parliamentary democracy, so the Vichy experience had made impossible any direct evocation of authoritarian conservatism. Indeed, that had been the trouble with the earlier Rally of the French People. Although this was far from de Gaulle's intent, the Rally smacked too much of Vichy. Or—on the other horn of the dilemma—its elected representatives tended to become ordinary parliamentarians in the conservative republican tradition. It was in this fashion that the Rally had finally fallen apart. Its failure offered a warning to all good Gaullists.

This time the very lack of an organized movement offered distinct advantages. It served as a persuasive answer to the charge that the new Gaullism was in any conscious sense fascist in inspiration. And it made possible the most extraordinary improvisations and adaptations. In his government as originally constituted, de Gaulle seemed to have picked his Ministers almost at random. Along with a large number of civil servants and "technicians," one found the two most influential parliamentarians of the Assembly that had just been sent home in disgrace—Pinay for the right, Mollet for the left. It was as though in his disdainful *grand seigneur* manner, de Gaulle had decided that the whole issue was not particularly important, that he could pick his colleagues from where he wished, including the debris of the old political parties. Moreover these were not really to be his colleagues: they were to be clerks or servants. The Ministry did not function as a true Cabinet with joint responsibility. Indeed, one indiscreet participant—Mauroux again—went so far as to describe an early session as "similar to those in Napoleon's time."

In the first weeks of the new regime the dispatch of official business proceeded at a

Napoleonic rhythm. In his highly personal style that combined majesty with elusiveness, de Gaulle gave orders and his harassed Ministers did their best to carry them out. Or rather they were harassed in a different and perhaps less taxing manner than had been the case in the past. The telephones in their offices had stopped ringing; a great calm settled over the Ministries, as the Deputies and Senators ceased their customary importunities. For the first time in living memory, the higher civil servants observed, it was possible to put in a full day's work almost without interruption.

THE historical image is of France in 1800—Bonaparte is First Consul, and, after the shabbiness and corruption of half a decade of rule by committee, the country has at last found a master capable of putting the administrative machine in order. But this master is still only Citizen Bonaparte: he is not yet Emperor. Republican forms have been preserved, the effete heirs of the great Revolution have been absorbed into the new administration, and a margin of liberty remains. The memory of the heroic, embattled Republic of 1793 is still fresh—but it is a memory that the First Consul is seeking to discipline and to steer into constructive channels. Substitute the wartime Resistance for 1793, and the Fourth Republic for the Directory, and you have a suggestion of the present ideological atmosphere. It evokes Bonapartism in its "pure" and truly popular form, before it was overlaid with the flummeries of the Napoleonic Empire. This is a Bonapartism with which most Americans are unfamiliar, and which even for the French has become dimmed by successive deformations. When we think today of the heirs of Napoleon, our minds turn toward more sinister things—the association of the military with royalism and reaction, the persecution of Captain Dreyfus, and the fascist agitation of the 1930's. Since the turn of the century, at least, nationalism in the Napoleonic tradition has appeared most often as the sworn enemy of republican and democratic institutions.

Yet this was not always or necessarily so. Throughout the past century and a half of French history, there has never ceased to exist an alternative possibility, the thin thread of a contrary tradition, often scarcely perceptible but never completely submerged. Within this alternative tradition, democracy and the Republic have figured as perfectly compatible with militarism and strong government. Such were the perspectives which Napoleon himself sought to provide in the proclamations of his Hundred Days in 1815, and in thus returning to his own ideological origins, he set the stage for the development of a personal legend that was at variance with the imperial phase of his career, and for the association of Bonapartism with Jacobinism in the 1820's and 1830's. In this lay the basis of Napoleon III's popular appeal: when in his imprecise and rambling style he wrote of the "Napoleonic ideas" that he proposed to incarnate, democracy and equality naturally took a prominent place among them.

The facts of Louis Napoleon's rule, as of that of his uncle, belied most of these promises. After the defeat of 1870, the democratic possibility within the nationalist or authoritarian tradition seldom appeared in a consciously Bonapartist form. Indeed, its 20th-century manifestations have been so varied that the historians in general have not seen fit to juxtapose them. Yet surely one can find a common denominator in such tendencies as the following: the mentality on the eve of the First World War of so many of the youth of France, who followed Charles Péguy in a common cult of the people, the Republic, the army, and the grandeur of tradition; the rule of the "Jacobin" Clemenceau in the final year of the conflict and his abortive postwar project of a strong presidency; finally, the military aspects of the Resistance itself, with its combination of republican loyalty and devotion to the person of an unquestioned chief.

All this is simply to say that de Gaulle and his immediate advisers are not necessarily insincere when they maintain that the sort of personal rule under which France

now lives can be reconciled with democracy and the Republic. In making such a claim, they have a long, if rather spotty, tradition behind them. Indeed, as we have seen, it is the only ideological tradition that has emerged reasonably intact from the calamities of the past twenty years. But this is simply the surface of the game. The real struggle lies deeper—between the organized forces that are trying to mold the still inchoate Gaullist regime in the image of their own desires. Ultimately, it will be on the General's ability to master or to neutralize these forces—and thereby to remain true to his own ideological inspiration—that the historians of the future will judge him.

IN FRANCE in the summer of 1958, there was one overriding question: Who was ruling? Paris or Algiers? The civilians or the army? And along with this there went the further doubt as to the solution intended for the Algerian war itself. Finally there was the question of the new constitution. Would it be the sort of "presidential" regime that de Gaulle and his followers were presumed to favor? Or would it rather be a hybrid, with both presidential and parliamentary features? And within the framework of the new institutions, what would be the role of political parties and of a constitutional opposition in the traditional sense? Until it had provided an answer to these questions, de Gaulle's government could not be considered to have advanced beyond the stage of experiment and improvisation.

With the French forces established in Algeria, both civilian and military, we encounter for the first time an ideology that can properly be called fascist. And—in contrast to most past experience—it is the military who are more politically sophisticated than the civilians. The *colon* mentality seems to be pretty crude—a combination of old-fashioned colonialism, *Pétainiste* memories, and a few strong-arm tricks of totalitarian inspiration; aside from the utterances of Jacques Soustelle, who is bright enough to give their ideas a minimum of intellectual consistency, the civilians almost totally lack

the rationale of a true political movement. With the army it is quite different. Perhaps the biggest surprise of last spring's crisis was the revelation that the young colonels had quietly been working out a political line of their own.

This is something new in modern French history. Traditionally the military have been content to borrow their ideas from the civilians, or to remain neutral in the political battle. To find a historical parallel one would have to go as far afield as the German Free Corps of the 1920's, and more particularly the veterans of the struggle against the Bolsheviks along the Baltic. The latter were genuinely convinced of their moral superiority to the civilians: their whole youth had been passed in battle and they were emotionally unable to adjust to a world at peace. At the same time, and rather more significantly, they had learned to measure their foe at his full worth: their deadly hatred of Communism did not exclude respect and even imitation. Similarly the French military, absorbed for more than a decade in colonial warfare of the most discouraging kind—warfare without apparent end and with only lukewarm support at home—have come to scorn the civilian ethic of sterile politicking and material self-indulgence. From the struggle in Indo-China they acquired a belated political education: observation of Viet Minh practice and a study of the precepts of Mao Tse-tung taught them why Asian Communism had won so often. In this hard school they learned the virtues of personal asceticism and of seizing the psychological initiative at the grass-roots level; a policy of active social endeavor in the Algerian villages has been the first fruit of this painful effort at self-education.

The military are convinced that given a free hand and full support from Paris they can pacify and reconcile the Algerian Moslems. They are now committed to a policy of total integration. What to the French civilians of Algeria is frequently no more than a clever political maneuver, to the military is a matter of deadly earnest. De Gaulle's

own views on this crucial topic are far from clear. His war record suggests both generosity to native aspirations and an insistence on maintaining the French "presence." He has consistently refused to pronounce the word "integration," and he apparently prefers some sort of federal solution. But such a solution, which might have been practicable a decade ago, has subsequently been overtaken by events. It is difficult to see how under present conditions it would be possible to establish a federation of the three North African territories—and to link these in turn with France—without the grant of at least technical independence to Algeria that would put it on a par with Tunisia and Morocco.

For the summer months, the tactic in Paris was to play for time; this was the most charitable explanation of Soustelle's appointment to the Ministry under pressure from Algiers. Only the balloting in the autumn could give de Gaulle what he most urgently needed—more suitable institutions, a solid parliamentary majority, and some guide to the evolution of Moslem sentiment. Meantime his policy seemed to be to offend as few people as possible by restricting his public pronouncements to exalted generalities. Here again, however, one problem fitted into another to suggest once more the tight entanglement of de Gaulle's dilemmas. The future constitution itself could not be thought of independently of the Algerian settlement. For "integration" in practice would mean that roughly one-sixth of the deputies in Paris would be Moslems—and these would hold the balance of power. Such a situation would be tolerable only if the parliamentary assemblies themselves were kept strictly in check. In short, integration presupposed an authoritarian constitution.

AS THE summer wore on, however, and the outlines of the new constitutional document were gradually revealed to the public, it became apparent that this was not what de Gaulle was aiming at. The permanent institutions of the future, like the provisional regime of the summer months, would be a

hybrid of two different republican traditions, combining both "presidential" and parliamentary features. A reinforced presidency would be tailored to de Gaulle's own concept of the office. But it would be a presidency more of the Eisenhower than of the Roosevelt type. (Again the Gaullist notion of an arbiter above parties is evident.) The day-to-day conduct of government would devolve on a prime minister, and he in turn, although the president's personal appointee, would be responsible to the parliament.

How this will work out in practice is the problem now agitating French political scientists. For here precedents are entirely lacking. The present-day examples are all definitely of one type or the other: the executive in the United States and in Switzerland is without responsibility to the legislative; nearly everywhere else in Europe and in the Commonwealth parliamentary government is the rule. And the precedents from the French past are no more helpful. The obvious conclusion is a truism of political science: the new constitution itself is less important than the spirit in which it is applied. And this reflection in turn suggests the problem of the coming elections and the role of a constitutional opposition in them. As the autumn electoral season opens, it is becoming evident that the regime of the future depends in large part on the fashion in which the campaign itself is conducted. Will it be a kind of personal plebiscite, with no more than token opposition, or a true election, in which the voters are offered a real alternative?

This is the central issue for those rare political leaders among the non-Communist left with sufficient personal resiliency to surmount the shock of last May. In the center and on the right, the underlying evolution is fairly obvious: through all the reshufflings and regroupings, the solemn announcements of the formation of new movements and parties, the drift is toward a vast, if loosely allied "party of order," loyal to de Gaulle. Among the moderate left, things are far less clear: the Radicals are in

chaos, and Guy Mollet is barely able to impose a minimum of conformity on a Socialist party that the investiture vote split down the middle. At the same time, it is isolated individuals from among the Radicals and the Socialists who are beginning to provide the leadership for a constitutional opposition in embryo—the Union of Democratic Forces organized in early July on the initiative of the dissident Socialist Daniel Mayer. Its original adherents included some of the most distinguished names in French politics: André Philip, Edouard Depreux, François Mitterand, Pierre Mendès-France—all of them long-standing opponents of the policy of repression in Algeria. But the extent of its popular following is still undetermined. And in its electoral tactics it faces a most difficult choice: should it oppose the new institutions themselves, in the constitutional referendum that will precede the parliamentary elections, or hold its fire and conduct its opposition solely *within* the framework of the Gaullist constitution?

The latter course was what Mendès-France advised. And as late as mid-summer this seemed the part of political wisdom. For it was difficult to oppose the draft constitution without offering any alternative to it, and such an alternative was entirely lacking. The constitution of the Fourth Republic was un-mourned: indeed, its last years had seen almost universal agreement that the executive needed strengthening. The parliamentary elections, however, are quite a different matter. The whole future course of the new regime may depend on the part played by a constitutional opposition, alert to every violation of personal liberty.

GENERAL DE GAULLE originally came to power on the understanding that he would take swift action in a desperate emergency. So far he has been unable to do this. He was appointed to do the extraordinary. What he has accomplished to date has been quite ordinary. Like the governments of the Fourth Republic that he has condemned so mercilessly, he has been forced to temporize and to postpone.

Let us try, however, to give him the benefit of the doubt. Granted that de Gaulle succeeds in curbing the army and in bringing Algiers to full obedience, granted that he proposes a liberal solution for the Moslem insurrection, granted that a constitutional opposition becomes a reality—and these are all conditions that currently are far from being fulfilled—even then our problem of definition will not be solved. For even under optimum conditions (so far as political liberty is concerned) de Gaulle's regime will remain a personal one: its character will still depend on the pressures impinging on the General himself. This brings us right back to the two de Gaulles with which we started—de Gaulle the exponent of archaic grandeur, de Gaulle the 20th-century man. Similarly, it raises anew the question whether nostalgia for a glorious past can be reconciled with the technical modernization of French society and the French economy. The more discerning observers do not think so. They find de Gaulle's own psychological contradictions mirrored in the contrasts that split his following. In the vast heterogeneity of the support that he presides over rather than commands, they see two sharply opposed groups as alone capable of pursuing a coherent and effective policy.

The first, of course, consists of the "colonels" and those of a similar turn of mind. I have presupposed that they will be reduced to obedience and effectively harnessed to the new regime. But this does not mean that their power will be ended. In fact, the clipping of their wings might have the very opposite effect. If and when the Algerian war is brought to an end, the army will have to be transported home and re-integrated with the main stream of national life. And at this moment the military may have their great chance. With the termination of the long cycle of colonial wars, their talents will be set free for other employment. And in the home country they will find a constituency prepared and waiting for them. This constituency is made up of all those with a nostalgia for the past, whether in terms of economics or in terms

of national policy. Pinay expresses the views of the more prosperous and liberal-minded of them; a couple of years back Poujade broadcast the complaints of the smaller people, pushed by economic desperation toward a primitive chauvinism and authoritarian demands. There are exceptions to the equation between economic conservatism and a nationalist mentality, but most of the time they go together. This vast constituency currently lacks direction. Is it too far-fetched to suggest that the military may eventually be able to supply it? The experience of German and Italian fascism has shown how an old-fashioned type of national conservatism can strike an alliance with a new force that is far more imaginative and revolutionary. And it has also shown how this revolutionary force can in turn evolve in a more conservative direction.

The second group capable of effective action consists of the modernizers—the enlightened businessmen and civil servants. These people want to develop the tendencies that are already pushing French society and the French economy toward the model of its more “advanced” neighbors and allies—Germany, Belgium, Britain, and the United States. They want to expand industrial production, to rationalize the agrarian economy, and to reduce the enormously swollen apparatus of distribution. Once people of this sort followed the lead of Mendès-France—now they look to de Gaulle. For they know that only a strong and efficient executive can hope to combat the entrenched economic interests that have had a stranglehold on successive French parliaments. Their mentality is “technocratic” and “neo-capitalist”: it is by no means necessarily authoritarian. But under present conditions they, like so many other Frenchmen, see no alternative to the personal rule of de Gaulle.

OBVIOUSLY the ultimate future belongs to this latter group. And in the far future also the structure of French life will almost necessarily be democratic. The very tendencies which these people are trying to accelerate imply a democracy of the homogene-

ous and conformist type that we have come to associate with advanced industrial nations. It is difficult to think of the eventual solution for France in any other fashion. But in the short term, the conservatives are more likely to have the upper hand. Although the modernizers are numerous among the French elite, their electoral base is narrow. The current paralysis on the left—both Communist and Socialist—has frozen in place the constituency from which they might otherwise be able to draw recruits. Moreover their attitude on imperial questions is in conflict with de Gaulle's most cherished beliefs. By implication, if not always in conscious theory, the modernizers think in terms of a “little France” wholly absorbed in the task of its own self-improvement. The dominant mentality of the present hour lays the stress on a national mission and on grandeur overseas.

Thus the French apparently feel the need of one last flight into illusion before settling down, as the Germans and Italians have already done, to the workaday task of taking their normal place in an industrial world. Germany and Italy also went through their period of illusion—and we call it fascism. In France the phase of transition and adjustment is likely to be briefer and less oppressive. I have met no Frenchman who predicts a full-fledged fascist regime for his country, but the majority of those I have encountered are anxious and preoccupied. What they anticipate for the immediate future is a Republic decisively led, and under military and conservative auspices. Democratic forms, they suggest, will be preserved, and the parliamentary assemblies and the political parties will appear to be much as they were before. But their real role will have changed: a great deal of their activity will be merely formal. Freedom of speech and of the press will technically remain intact—but their effective range will be reduced by government pressure and a growing conformism. Nostalgia for a glorious past, an apathetic acceptance of the official line, and a gradual erosion of liberty: these are the prospects for the immediate future that the French see before them.